Dear George, 3/25/81

Excuse the fact that I will not be taking time to correct my typos because I respond to your letter in haste, as I must, having lsost an entire day yesterday on dental and medical problems and I'll have tobe spending much of today away from home.

The assassination of a President, in addition to being the most dramatic of crimes, is the most subversive of crimes in a representative society. It negates the electoral process. It amounts to a coup d'etat.

When John Kennedy was killed in broad daylight, on the streets of a major American city, there was an instant solution by the police of that city, before there was any investigation. It was a prejudicial solutjion. So,ehow, almost magically, the Dallas police knew that Lee Harvey Oswald was a red and with every copy holding a press conference on every street corner, soon the world was persuaded that t e reds offed JFK.

Back in Washington, J. EdgarHoover, head of the nationa's most fampus police force, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reached the same instant solution, that his hated reds, those on whom he built his career around his hatred of them, killed the President. To be certain that nobody could gainay him, Hoover seized t e case immediately, knowing full well that he lacked jurisdiction and also knowing that if he did not control what could be known and believed his vaunted FBI would be criticized for failing.

As a result of these and other factors there never was any investigation of the crime. Instead, there was an investigation intended to make it appear that Lee Harvey Oswald, alone and unassisted, pulled off the dastardly deed with a worn-out rifle that was known asMussolini's contribution to humanitarian warfare.

Hoover kept control by leaking bits and pieces of supposed information, usually misinformation, to favored elements of the press.

The papers competed for Hoover's leaks. There was no Washington Post to turn loose journalitic hounds to follow the trail, as happened with Watergate.

The press failed because from the time of the killing there has been no time when there were not substantial questions. The press did not address them.

It fell, as happens in a representative society, for individual citizens, to raise these questions. Those who did it in books all faced a book publishing industry that was incredibly unwilling to give serious consideration to the serious question - which today remain unanswered.

When the books finally appeared, the press was antagonistic to them, save for the mostbirresponsible of them.

Commerical publishers do not, generally, lack commercial instincts. They had a gut feeling that substantial criticism of the government for failing when a President was killed would be rracted to strongly by the government, which could make serious problems for those raising the question. This happened to some of the critics. For example, when LBJ asked the FBI to tell him about us, it heaped the most incredible defamatjons on him. With me it was that my wife and I annually celebrated the Russian revolution. This kind of ting turned LBJ off. (What Hoover lied about is an annual gathering at a small farm my wife and I had, by the Jewish Welfare Board, which annually took Washington area service personnel and their families up so the kids vould watch eggs being hatched, play with baby chicks, gather eggs, ride on the backs of tame cattle, and in other ways relax after the rigors of orthodox observance of the Jewish high holidays.)

One of the early critics who for a decade and a half was not able to put a book together was David Lifton. He invented all sorts of solutions to this "crime of the century." One of his earliest is that the assassination was committed by means of tunnels constructed in utter secrecy by the large firm of Brown and Root, Lifton' buzzword for LBJ, who was supported by it.

He phoned me late in the spring or early in the summer of 1966, after he read my Whitewash, to persuade me of this and to inform me that the real assassins hung from papier mache trees Brown and Root had plated in Dealey Plaza.

The last solution he gave me, just before the 1968 election, is t at Dean Rusk and LBJ had had conspiratorial meetings throughout the State of Texas during the days immediately before they had the job done. This was a revision of his solution in which LBJ conspired with Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA JFK had to fire after the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs.

Then Lifton got an agent who appreciated the commercial possibilities and laid them out to a publisher. A s a result Lifton's book was converted into a personalized account of his career as Dick Daring.

With this format a best seller emerged and with this format, the fact that in the book there is nothing about the crime and its investigation that was not published earlier by many others, often me.

What Lifton added, in addition to taking personal credit for what others had published and he had read in their books, is a new theory. That it is an absolutely impossible theory, like all his earlier and contradictory ones, was lost sight of because there was no critical attention to the book and because the publisher was willing to spend what is required to attract major attention to it.

Lifton's theory is that there was hanky-panky with the corpse, to obscure the corpus delecti (which he never mentions because it is essential for him to fudge over the actual facts that to a large degree are without real question) The body of evidence is not addressed as such. arts, only those parts that could be made to appear not to be inconsistent with Lifton's theory, are mentioned in a way intended to make them ap ear, to the uninformed, as proof of his theory.

Lifton states a series of alleged possibilities for the tampering with the corpse.

His first is that because General Godfrey McHugh was not with the corpse on Air Force 1 while LBJ was being sworn in on it, the body was unguarded and it could have been tojed with then. Not only has McHugh been published in Time magazine, which went for a summary of the book in advance of publication, saying that Lifton is factually incorrect, but Lifton omits all the others then on the plane and not at the swearing in.

For all his attention to detail and pictures, Lifton omits these details and the official photos of those who were at the swearing in. There were a number of Kennedy people and Secret Service and military personnel who were in the part of the plane where the casket and the corpse were.

Lifton next says that the body was off-loaded at Washington's Andrews Air Force base on the side of the plane away from the waiting celebrities. He claims that what we all saw on TV, the casket being lowered, is a phoney, and the body was actually spirited off on the other side and then whisked to Walter Reed Army hospital for the dirty workings. To advance this argument Lifton ignores the fact that there were some 3,000 anguished American looking at the off side of AF1, from the other side of the fence near which it was parked. In William Manchester's Death of a President there is a touchin account of those mourners. Not one, according to Lifton, saw anything.

Lifton then has the altered body snuck into Bethesda Navy Hospital through its back agte. He assumes it was open and that this was possible. Actually, as part of the security instotuted, i was locked and without an attendant. I know this because I have a neighbor and friend who was then assigned to that hospital. He always used the back gate on leaving and that night it was locked, with no guard to open it.

Lifton has s shell game with caskets and ambulances, phoney and empty caskets and extra ambulances for the sleight-of-hand with them nd the corpse. He can do this

because his concoctions are immaterial and irrelevant and because when one makes something up there is no practical limit. But the most casual checking shows that in addition to the ambulance requested from AF 1 the head of the Navy hospital, who had treated LBJ for his heart condition, dispatched an ambulance, unasked, with a cardiac specialist in it, in the event the stress was too much for LBJ. This alone can account for a second ambulance. Omotted by Lifton although in a source he quotes for other purposes, Manchester's book.

As for the extra caskets, accounting for three caskets, is easy. There is the one in which the corpse was teansported from Dallas. The Kennedy people did not like it and it was also damaged. There is the one the Kennedy people then obtained from the Gawler Funeral Home not far from the Navy Hospital, the one in which the President was buried. And then there is the sual one sent by the Military District of Washogton along with its ceremonial detachment, a palin GI casket that was never used.

Examination of any part of what is uniquely Lifton, which means only what is immaterial to the crime and its investigation but is essentill to his fabriactions, destroys each part.

Take the simple error in an FBI report Lifton claims as his major discovery, a report in which surgery on the head is reported. Actually, I came upon this about April or May of 1966, in one of the earlier Commission records I examined at the Archives, and I gave copies to others, including those from whom Lifton could have gotten his copy. Then it was later distributed by Bantam to promote its edition of Epstein's inquest, the third of these assassination books to appear. Although Lifton claims this to him significant reference to an alleged surgery on the President's head was ignored by all others, I published the report, and I believe that Fred Newcomb also did. (And Lifton had been close to Newcomb.) The actuality is that the FBI agents, under great stress, misstated a reference to the tracheotomy, on the neck, not the head.

The cutest, and perhaps the most dishonest, of Lifton's omissions is essential to his creation of time for all those sinsiter dirty deeds, time he says was used in secret to alter the mute evidence of the corpse, particularly the brain. Lifton gets this time by eliminating the considerable amount of time required for and spent in making pre-autopsy X-rays and pictures, those that had to be made and were made before the body was touched. There is no mention of this in all those hundreds of pages devoted to the creation of Lifton as a new folk hero, the one boy with his finger in the dike.

When the time this required is put back in Lifton'd chronology it is obvious that there simply wasn't the possibility of any of the horrible things he fabricated to have happened.

But with it there also was no book, so Lifton, with a decade and a half singularly without any meaningful accomplishment, was equal to his personal need, as he was up to pretending that all the work done by so many others and apparent to anyone familiar with the literature, was his own personal accomplishment.

There is no end to what Lifton omits to make his self-deification possible. It permeates this massive book. When he has inconsistent statements by one person, as with Carolyn Arnold, he simply imits what is inconsistent with his theory. The average reader has no way of replacing it.

The publisher makes a big thing of his allegedly diligent efforts to check Lifton out, but his press kits makes no reference to consultation with any subject expert. This is not because Lifton's agent did not know one - me.

Lifton's reference to me, as part of his compulsive need to put down all those whose work he took, is baseless. He has me in fear of his checking out the footnates in Whitewash. Actually, all are merely citations to the Commission's published work and not one appears as a footnate. You can check them all and you'll find these simple

referehces are accurate. Unlike otjers, who seek to commercialize footnotes, I made these are unobtrusive as possible, putting them like 2H23, all in parens in the text. On this fact his invention is not reasonable, but the average reader has no way of knowing this. The stated purpose of my first book was to cause a Congressional investigation. How in the world could I have hoped to accomplish that if I had any phoney ~~fxxxxxxx~~ s footnotes?

I r ad the book and annotated it as I read it. It is an incredibly bad, even evil, book. It is one of the large body of works thatare disinformations, that make exaggerated claims and postulate impossible but commerically acceptable and safe conspiracies, that formyears have been misused by those with influence or authority, to put down all the legitimate criticism that remains unanswered.

The files of the federal agencies abond withsuch stuff. It is distributed within the bureaucracy to make it appear that all critifism is wit out merit and ought not be considered. As with LBJ, above.

Excuse the haste, and good luck.

Sincerely,